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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000970

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PACOM FOR FPA

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SUBJECT: NLD RESIGNED ABOUT COERCED RESIGNATIONS

Classified By: P/E: Mark B. Taylor for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

1.(C) SUMMARY: NLD leaders continue to dismiss any impact from the regime's collection of members' resignations, citing their survival after earlier government-coerced resignations.

However, recent efforts have been more focused and appear targeted to eliminate the party's structure in several Shan and Kachin townships. At the same time, articles trumpet the strength of the government-organized mass member organization, USDA. The obvious GOB intent is to lay the groundwork for a USDA "victory" whenever elections may be scheduled. END SUMMARY

2.(C) State media regularly report on the regime's efforts to secure the formal resignations of NLD members across the country. The regime has coerced the resignations over the years with no apparent geographical priority or order. Media reports of resignations of groups of 50 to 80 NLD members are common. NLD estimated its membership at two million in 1990, when they stopped recruiting.

3.(SBU) More recently, however, the regime has focused on obtaining the resignations of the NLD's township leadership in two ethnic majority states. State media in May and June reported the mass resignation of several NLD township committees in the Shan and Kachin States. While seldom citing "committee members," the reports implied these were the NLD's leaders in the townships by referring to them as "executives" and the "township original members."

4.(C) In an early July meeting, NLD MP and former NLD Central Committee member Sai Ohn Maung (strictly protect) confirmed reports of the coerced resignations of NLD committee members in the Shan townships of Kalaw and Naungshwe (his home constituency), in early May. Ohn Maung gave Emboff a copy of the resignation letter signed by Daw Kyi San, a Naungshwe committee member. Daw Kyi San explained that government security officials strongly pressured committee members to sign the prepared letters. The letter she signed states that "while it is true that the NLD won a majority in the election, the NLD has neglected the people's will by rejecting the National Convention. . .and now asks for a dialogue with the SPDC, a move that does not make sense."

5.(C) Ohn Maung pointed out the quality of the letter, produced by computer and ready for signatures with members' names and national identity numbers. Ohn Maung explained that, unlike resignations gained with economic incentives, the government's security personnel used threats of future harm or other unspecified trouble to obtain the resignations from NLD committee leaders in Shan townships.

WE HAVE WAYS TO MAKE YOU RESIGN

6.(C) National and local NLD officials report that the SPDC has used a wide range of measures to coerce resignations. The government identifies any vulnerability to exploit as leverage, stated NLD Central Executive Committee (CEC) member U Nyunt Wei. He cited the recent experience of a female township executive committee member in Mandalay Division. The woman's niece planned to marry a junior police officer, but the officer's family made the marriage contingent on the aunt's resignation from the NLD. The aunt ultimately resigned and is now distraught and sick, claimed U Nyunt Wei. Cash or business privileges also have been used as incentives.

CREATING NLD-FREE ZONES?

7.(C) Sai Ohn Maung, whom the NLD was forced to expel from the party in 1990, has watched the steady progression of the regime's campaign to collect resignations of the NLD leaders in Shan State. He concluded that the SPDC intends to create "NLD-free" townships, perhaps with the ultimate goal of declaring Shan state, as well as other states and divisions, devoid of NLD structures or activity.

8.(C) In a July 5 meeting, NLD CEC Member U Nyunt Wei acknowledged that the resignations of township committee members en masse effectively eliminate any NLD structure in these localities, with few prospects of regeneration. In parts of the Shan State, the GOB declared villages and

townships "USDA villages" or "USDA townships." He believes the SPDC seeks as many "NLD-free" townships as possible before the November 2006 resumption of the National Convention, at which the USDA may play a greater political role. Nyunt Wei noted, however, that the regime's success in obtaining mass resignations of NLD township committee members in the Shan and Kachin states also reflected the NLD's limited strength in these states where ethnic political parties won many of the parliamentary contests in the 1990 elections. The rolling up of township committees in the NLD stronghold, the central divisions, would be much more difficult, he declared.

9.(C) COMMENT: The pressure on NLD never eases. At some level, the military understands that significant popular support for NLD remains. If they follow through on an eventual election, they do not want to risk a humiliating loss as in 1990. So they continue to persecute NLD members and try to build the aura of popular support for USDA. They do not appear ready to test the support anytime soon. END COMMENT
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